

Ohio Conference Moderator's Report 2017

My dear church,

I have been honored to serve the Ohio Conference as moderator for the last two years. God is working through me, as well as all of us, as we gathered to make tough decisions, listened to one another, cried at those tough decisions, and laughed together. We have worked to build community and share words of update as the year has gone along. We have tried to be open and listen to what is happening in the world and in the church and act with compassion and care. I know that we have been faithful.

I grew up in Ohio, I went to both Pilgrim and Temped Hills as a kid and youth, I love them, they are "thin places" for me. Summer church camp is where I received my call, I attended youth activities and learned my faith from the beginning here in Ohio. I have taught school in Ohio, and 3 of the 4 churches to which I have been called and served are in Ohio. My family lives here. Ohio is my home, and so when I was asked if I would be moderator of the wider church in Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky, I agreed and never realized how challenging, hard and life giving it would be.

I understand the Ohio Conference to give support and affirmation to things like grants, loans and nominations to the national boards and bodies, as other conferences do. The Ohio Conference is the body that has outdoor ministry and our German partnership. Our Conference Minister serves on behalf of our local churches on the Council of Conference Ministers and other bodies to coordinate ministries. I believe that the Ohio Conference is tasked with maintaining ecumenical and interfaith relationships and dialogues, as well as maintaining scholarships and grants for Members in Discernment.

I have been your moderator for two years; after the Annual Gathering, I move to past moderator, and Cathy Green becomes the moderator. The last two years have been a blessing with some really hard decisions that had to be made. I have led with God's grace, being authentic and transparent. At times my heart broke with the decisions that needed to be made, and with the Spirit of God moving through us, the Board worked hard to discern what God was calling us to.

Your Board of Directors have gathered and worked tirelessly to be good stewards of the finances of the Ohio Conference. Sam Buehrer, the Ohio Conference treasurer, along with the Finance Committee, have been diligent in their work. I appreciate the work that they do. The other officers: Bob Tussing, Ohio Conference Secretary; Tim Smith, Past Ohio Conference Moderator; Cathy Green, Vice Moderator of the Ohio Conference; have all worked with care and compassion to do what God is calling them to do. Pam Brown has been amazing in her work with all she does for the Ohio Conference. Nicole Havelka has strived to connect us with networking and creatively, as she uses her gifts. John Gantt has worked tirelessly as an Interim Ohio Conference Minister to challenge us and help us to vision the next steps of what God is calling us to do and be.

At times, these two years have been challenging. At times, the two years have been filled with hope. At times, there has been much discussion, and at other times silence that was filled with the breath of God. At times, I have had much correspondence shared with your thoughts and ideas. Your elected Board of Directors, officers and staff have worked hard to be the church in this place at this time.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve in this way. Blessings abound as we continue to hear God working with and through us,

Mindy

Rev. Melinda Quellhorst
Pastor Grace United Church of Christ
Moderator, Ohio Conference